



BUFFALO FIELD CAMPAIGN

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Chairman Lee Randall and members of the House Agriculture committee
Montana House of Representatives
PO Box 200400
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Mr. Chairman and members of the House Agriculture committee,

On behalf of Buffalo Field Campaign I am submitting testimony on HB 312. Mr. Chairman, I would also request that my testimony be shared with committee members and entered into the hearing record. Thank you.

Buffalo Field Campaign is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) whose mission is to stop the slaughter of Yellowstone's wild buffalo herd, protect the natural habitat of wild free-roaming buffalo and native wildlife, and to work with people of all Nations to honor the sacredness of the wild buffalo.

Buffalo Field Campaign is located in West Yellowstone, Gallatin County, Montana, and is supported by volunteers and citizens in Montana and by people from around the world who value America's native wildlife and the ecosystems upon which they depend, and enjoy the natural wonders of our irreplaceable public lands.

As an organization and on behalf of our members, Buffalo Field Campaign is concerned and actively involved with protecting the last remaining descendants of indigenous buffalo in North America to occupy their original range, and securing long-term protection for viable populations of wild buffalo and year-round habitat.

Buffalo Field Campaign is adamantly opposed to HB 312, for many reasons.

HB 312 gives the Montana state veterinarian and the Dept. of Livestock unprecedented authority over migratory elk populations and other public wildlife. This is unacceptable to Montanans who value our public wildlife heritage.

HB 312 requires Montana's veterinarian "in coordination" with Fish, Wildlife & Parks to "develop brucellosis surveillance and prevalence reduction procedures" for elk in southwest Montana. As practiced by Montana, brucellosis "prevalence reduction" in wildlife means drugging/capturing, testing for antibodies, and slaughter.

HB 312 attempts to graft the worst aspects of Montana buffalo law onto elk. If Montana buffalo 'management' is any guide this legislature will set the state on a course that is destructive to our wildlife, costly to taxpayers, and that will result in endless public controversy and political battles.

According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, Montana is now thirteen years into a 'bison management plan' that costs over \$3,000,000 taxpayer dollars every year. Under this plan, Montana and Yellowstone National Park have destroyed 3,200 of our last wild buffalo.

Must elk now run the same failed, costly gauntlet established by the Montana legislature for buffalo? What native species is going to be targeted next?

While there has never been a documented case of brucellosis transmission from migratory buffalo to cattle, HB 312 requires the Montana state veterinarian to enforce MCA 81-2-120 in a manner that eliminates or minimizes any disease risk "as much as possible." That means if migratory buffalo were identified by the state vet as a source of infection in livestock, HB 312 would require buffalo to be destroyed by firearms, and or subject them to hazing, capture, quarantine, and transport to slaughterhouses.

In brief, HB 312 would prevent wild migratory buffalo from occupying habitat in Montana altogether if the state veterinarian finds buffalo to have likely infected cattle with brucellosis.

Wildlife belongs not to the state or any one person or interest group. Native species belong to future generations who are the beneficiaries of our wildlife heritage trust.

Wildlife management belongs to wildlife agencies entrusted with ensuring our wildlife heritage is protected and persists for future generations to enjoy and experience.

We question why the Montana Legislature is delegating czar like power over our wildlife to one person who represents and is only accountable to the livestock industry.

A Fiscal Note for HB 312 has been requested to determine the costs borne by taxpayers and hunters. These costs will run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars annually with no corresponding benefit for our wildlife.

HB 312 is not amendable. Thank you for taking action to prevent livestock authority over our wildlife and protecting migratory buffalo and elk as valued wildlife species by voting to defeat HB 312.

Sincerely,

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WILD BUFFALO, PUBLIC LANDS, MATTER TO MONTANA

Seventy percent of Montanans favor restoration of wild bison in Montana according to a February 2011 poll by Moore Information.

Three in four Americans polled in 2008 believe that the wild American bison is an *"extremely important living symbol of the American West."* (Science Daily 2008)

A cost-benefit study from acquiring winter range for bison outside Yellowstone National Park found "conservatively calculated" net "measurable benefits" of \$4.43 million. (Yellowstone National Park 2000)

"... between 1969 and 1989, more than 96% of all new jobs in the Greater Yellowstone Area came from sectors other than timber, mining, and agriculture." (Yellowstone National Park 2000)

According to the Montana Office of Tourism, *"Tourism is one of Montana's leading and fastest growing industries."*

- 10 million people traveled to Montana in 2008 and spent \$3 billion supporting \$897 million dollars in worker salaries.
- Tourism and recreation businesses account for 42,200 Montana jobs.

Over 3,640,000 people visited Yellowstone National Park in 2010. (Yellowstone National Park 2011)

Over 2 million people visited Glacier National Park in 2009. (Thackeray 2010)

According to a study by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research (2010), a record 2 million people visited Montana state parks in 2010 with nonresidents spending over \$122 million dollars that produced 1,600 jobs in Montana.

"The fundamental conclusion of this study is that Montana State Parks represent an invaluable resource for the economy of Montana's regions, as well as the state as a whole."

Over 755,000 people engaged in Wildlife-Watching in Montana in 2006 - generating \$375 million dollars in retail sales, creating 9,772 jobs, and bringing in nearly \$100 million dollars in revenues. (Leonard USFWS 2008)

Hunter and angler expenditures in Montana topped half a billion dollars in 2008: fishing \$239,917,978 and hunting \$292,367,289. (Brooks and King MT FWP 2009)

SOURCES

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4. Montana Office of Tourism, Montana's Tourism and Recreation Industry Fast Facts. Online: <http://travelmontana.mt.gov/faq/fastfacts.asp>.
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8. Leonard, Jerry, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs, Wildlife Watching in the U.S.: The Economic Impacts on National and State Economies in 2006, July 2008. Online: <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/NationalSurvey/reports2006.html>
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